1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Hunting for food, like most fishing, is an individual affair. A number of men have shot-guns with which they hunt buck (duiker, bushbuck, and waterbuck) which are scarce, and game birds (guinea fowl, partridge, and duck) which are plentiful. The limiting factor is ammunition, which is relatively expensive, and few men waste a cartridge on birds unless they are sure of getting at least two with one shot. They stalk the sitting birds and fire (at point-blank range) at several birds in a line. One or two chiefs employ men specially to shoot for them, but in the diet of the people as a whole game plays a very small part, and there is no tradition of it ever having been of great importance.

Hunting for the protection of life and property is, on the other hand, a communal concern, organized like war. The chief calls out his men who assemble by villages, each under its own headman, and the chief disposes the groups. Attendance is compulsory and individuals or villages who fail to appear without good reason may be fined. Such communal hunts are still organized to kill wild pig, which devastate the gardens of some chiefdoms. We took part in one to which five village groups consisting of about 160 men and boys came. Formerly they were organized also if lion or leopard or other big game attacked men or cattle. The aim was to surround the animal and spear it, and here the importance of village relations became apparent, for the Nyakyusa argued that a man was less likely to be a coward if, in moments of danger, he stood with his relatives and village neighbours. 'We said that people of different age-villages should not stand together, every man should have his friends or relatives near him, so that if the leopard caught him the others would have to help and not shrink back! So people of the same age-village stood together, or relatives with relatives.'

Towards the end of last century Nyakyusa country abounded in big game.[1] Elephant were purposely shot out before 1935 because they were so destructive of crops, but lion, leopard, buffalo, hippo, and crocodile are still fairly common.

[1] Elton, op. cit., p. 319; D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. VI (1890), p. 282; 'Crater-lakes north of Lake Nyassa', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. V (1895), p. 119; F. L. M. Moir, *After Livingstone* (1923), pp. 90–119.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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that lives were lost in these dangerous adventures, 224
but no compensation was given to the relatives, as the risk was taken by command of the chief for the good of all. A great feast was given by the chief on the return from the hunt with the carcase of the lion or leopard. If no one was killed, the rejoicing was great; if there were casualties, the grief of a few was not allowed to damp the joy of the others, for a powerful public enemy had been disposed of, and it was an occasion for rejoicing.

Bird hunting is sport for boys, not for grown men. 223 •
A knobkerry skilfully thrown at a sitting bird sometimes brings it down; but bow and arrow, which are used almost exclusively for this sport, secure a heavier bag. Where bird life is plentiful, bird-lime is smeared on trees, and numbers are caught in this way. Loop traps, similar to those used for small animals, may be found anywhere in the bush, not seldom with a rotting victim still hanging in them. Drop traps, of a construction similar to that used by boys at home, are also used. A broken pot or a small basket is supported precariously by an upright; bait is placed within, and the bird, hopping on to a small platform, upsets the balance, and finds itself a prisoner. In suitable places small lakes are formed, and covered over with a network of loop traps, in which numbers of duck are caught.

Two interesting methods are followed by the boys. In the evening, when the birds are returning to roost, half a dozen boys stand with branches over their heads, while others wave smoky torches, to avoid

223 which the birds settle on the branches and are skilfully caught. The other method is to throw dust in the air, where birds are numerous, just after the young begin to leave the nests. The birds, "thinking it is rain," settle on the ground and are easily caught.

226 *Fishing.*—Fishing remains an important part of the year's work for those living near river or lake. For river fishing, huts are built in the vicinity of the place where the traps are to be set, for the fishers live there as long as the season lasts. Ceremonies similar to those observed before the hunters set out for the bush, must be performed. Sometime in May, when the river is in flood, the chief fisher of the Mbaka dreams of fish, a sign that the time has come to begin [278] the year's work. A great quantity of *unkonda*, fish poison, is prepared, each fisher, and there may be as many as fifty, preparing his own. When all are ready, led by the chief fisher, they go to the water, and trample the poison leaves into the bottom of the river. The poison sickens the fish, which are then easily caught in the traps which are set for them with [789] the mouth opening upstream. As soon as all the traps are set, the men lie down on their backs on the bank, and proceed to invoke the aid of sympathetic magic. They open and close their mouths, gasp, in imitation of dying fish. The probability of a good season is greatly enhanced by this process, which, though omitted now by many, is still widely followed.

The traps are laid in rows right across the river, and are in the form of immense baskets with gradually

233 343 462 [413] the women, but the men are responsible for keeping the floor of the stable in good repair. For this purpose a specific tool is used, called *ukutoba indobelu*. It is round on top, flattened on the lower side and provided with a handle.

224 5. *Hunting.* Sometimes the Nyakyusa go out to hunt, but nowadays hunting is much more restricted than in former times as described e. g by Mackenzie in his book: "The spirit-ridden Konde" (London 1925). This record, however, deals mostly with the Ngonde of the environment of Karonga whose interesting social history was unsurpassably revealed to us by Mr. Godfrey Wilson's treatise: "The Constitution of Ngonde" (The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, Number Three. Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia 1939.) Hunting in the Nyakyusa country is now [656] curtailed by governmental regulations. Hunting *(ukufuema)*, therefore, does not supply an essential part of the food requirements of the [136] natives. The colobus apes on the slopes of the Rungwe volcano and the [656] Poroto Mountains are sometimes killed for their attractive black and white skins, but fortunately this is now forbidden by the government. [439] Otherwise these apes would be exterminated in quite a short time, since the skins of these apes are in great demand with some Europeans for rugs and covers. Naturally, the hunting of lions and especially of leopards, which even nowadays still cause great damage, is not restricted.

224 231 The hunting of game for food is often done with dogs *(imbwa)* which have small bells *(inyesi)* on collars round their necks. Thereby the hunter *(umfuemi)* always knows the whereabouts of his dog. The chase is continued till the dog or dogs are exhausted. The object of the hunt *(umfuemu)* is generally a small type of antelope *(akasya)*, e. g. in the [656] environment of Mwakalele, as I was instructed. The usual time for hunting is the cooler season, but to-day a permit of the government is also required.

● 223 Catching birds by means of traps *(untegu*, pl. *imitegu)* is still common in the Nyakyusa area. I have also seen such traps constructed by means of the flicking-gallow's principle also in the vicinity of Utengule among the Safwa. The herd boys especially set traps to catch quails *(imbesi)* when the *malesi* (millet) harvest is over. Sometimes smaller birds are also coursed until they are exhausted and then slain. One day I found a stick vertically put on the soil and with a triangle made of smaller sticks at its top. The horizontal part of which was smeared with an adhesive substance. I was told that this was a trap for birds,

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

but I was astonished that this trap was erected relatively near to my tent on the border of the village of Katumba.

6. Fishing. Fishing is a much more common practice with the Nyakyusa than hunting. The old-established custom of poisoning fish in their smaller rivers is still widely used. The poison is derived from the *unkeredu* shrup. Its branches and leaves are broken off, reduced to small pieces between stones and then packed in a covering of grass to resemble a long cigar about 1 meter in length and 25 cm in width. The bundles prepared in such a manner are fixed between two rowes of stones placed across the river for this purpose. The poison gradually diffuses into the water, which takes on a green colour. The fish are soon affected by the poison and rise to the surface with gaping mouths. They are then easily caught with a scoop made from bamboo. The open end of a piece of bamboo is split into several sections and the splinters are bent apart and tied together with raffia to form a sort of funnel[1]. The fish are strung through their gills on small pliable sticks and roasted at home over a fire. All people are allowed to join in this fishing which to them is always a festive occasion in the cooler season.

Fishing in broader and deeper rivers, such as the lower Kiwira, is done by means of large fish-traps. They are made and repaired by men on the banks of the river. The traps are attached to poles rammed into the bed and almost invariably boats trying to reach the Lake Nyassa get struck on submerged poles. These large fish-traps strung across the river form quite an impressive sight. Looking up-stream, they look like the bows of little ships standing in a row.

7. Preparing food. With the Nyakusa the preparation of food is so exclusively the task of the women, that R. Thurnwald ist quite correct when says (Black and White in East Africa, London 1935, p. 157): "Menfolk starve if there are no women to prepare their meals". There is thus a very strong division of labour between the sexes, also noticable in the carrying of loads. For a young man to carry the load of an old woman or his sweetheart, whom perchance he might meet on the road, would be a grave violation of a rigid custom.

As the preparation of the food is the women's duty, also the grinding *(ukutika)* of the corn in a mortar *(ikituli)* with a pestle *(ikitiro)* which is the exclusive task of the female sex. The wife is always the first to rise in the morning to prepare breakfast. Usually, however, this is not

[1] NB. They are of the same kind as those of the Hottentots along the Great Fish River in South West Africa.